
NORTH CAROLINA PRAMS FACT SHEET

March 2009



Unintended Pregnancies

2004–2006 N.C. Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS)

- ◆ In the United States in 2001, of pregnancies identified as unintended (or unplanned) 44 percent ended in live births, 42 percent in abortions, and 14 percent in miscarriages.¹
- ◆ PRAMS data for 2004 through 2006 showed that approximately 45 percent of live births in North Carolina were the result of unintended pregnancies.
- ◆ For this report, the data on unintended pregnancies are for live births where women responding to the PRAMS survey reported that they wanted to be pregnant later or not at all.
- ◆ The Healthy People 2010 goal is that 70 percent of all pregnancies should be intended. North Carolina is presently far from achieving this goal, with only 55 percent of pregnancies resulting in live births being intended.
- ◆ Women younger than 20 years of age, African-American women, women with less than or equal to a high school education, and women who received Medicaid were more likely to report an unintended pregnancy in North Carolina during 2004–2006.
- ◆ The United States has the highest rate of pregnant teens among developed countries. About 1 million teens become pregnant each year; 80 percent of those pregnancies are unintended.² According to the NC PRAMS survey, approximately 70 percent of teen pregnancies in North Carolina are unintended, and teens account for one in six of all unintended pregnancies annually.
- ◆ Five out of six unintended pregnancies in North Carolina are to women over 20 years of age, so efforts to reduce unintended pregnancies need to include these older women too.
- ◆ Unintended pregnancy rates vary among racial groups: 63 percent of African-American women reported they had their babies as the result of unintended pregnancies, compared to 38 percent of white women. Hispanic women also reported a high rate of unintended pregnancy (48%).
- ◆ Women with a high school diploma or less education were much more likely to report an unintended pregnancy than women who had at least some college education.
- ◆ Sixty-seven percent of unmarried women indicated their pregnancies were unintended, compared to 32 percent of married women.
- ◆ Sixty-three percent of women who started prenatal care late in their pregnancies reported that their pregnancies were unintended, compared to 41 percent of those who began prenatal care earlier.
- ◆ Among women with unintended pregnancies, smaller proportions:
 - ❖ Took a multivitamin every day during the month before becoming pregnant (17 percent, compared to 40 percent of intended);
 - ❖ Had health insurance before the pregnancy (42 percent, compared to 65 percent of intended);
 - ❖ Were breastfeeding at the time of the survey (42 percent, compared to 53 percent of intended); and
 - ❖ Were in the \$50,000 or more household income bracket (15 percent, compared to 43 percent of intended).
- ◆ Among women with unintended pregnancies, larger proportions:
 - ❖ Were Medicaid recipients just before pregnancy, during pregnancy, or at delivery (72 percent, compared to 40 percent of intended);
 - ❖ Were WIC recipients (62 percent, compared to 35 percent of intended); and
 - ❖ Smoked during the three months before pregnancy (30 percent, compared to 19 percent of intended).